

When You Pray - Forgiveness

How many of you this morning believe that prayer is powerful? In prayer we have the ability to speak to the Creator of heaven and earth. Prayer is where burdens are lifted and lives are changed.

For the believer, prayer should direct your life instead of your life directing your prayer.

"Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?" ~ Corrie ten Boom

We have this tremendous power called prayer that we so often don't tap into the way that we should.

"No man is greater than his prayer life" ~ Leonard Ravenhill

So we've been breaking down the Lord's prayer with the purpose of building a greater prayer life. It's desperately needed in the world today and it's desperately needed in the church today.

But we're not talking about throwing up prayer in the hopes that God hears and responds. We're talking about the kind of prayer that is powerful and effective. Do you believe for that this morning?

Matthew 6:9-13 (NKJV)

In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

10 Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

13 And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

This is Jesus speaking.....to believers. WHEN....YOU....PRAY.....

Know God as a Father, One who wants good things for His children, One who wants to draw you near

Know that God is holy, He is unlike any other, He is above all things, and He is GOOD

Ask for His kingdom to come, that Jesus would return to reign in power, that He would reign in and through your life right now!

Ask that His will be done, that God's plans and desires would be done on this earth, even above your own plans and desires.....His are much better!

And ask for your daily provision, He provides it, He allows you to have it. Be thankful for that provision and don't take it for granted, thank Him that He continues to allow you to have it.

Matthew 6:12 (NKJV)

And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.

Forgive us our debts. What is a debt? It's something that is owed, something justly or legally due.

God has a law, the ten commandments. We did an entire series on that a year or so ago. But these commandments, we've all broken them. Right from the beginning, "don't have any other gods before Me" yet we've all served other things in this life ahead of Jesus.

James 2:10 (NKJV)

For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

So we all have this debt of sin. Sin has a cost and that is death. And without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. BUT GOD.....

In His great mercy, sent His Son Jesus to pay the price of our sin when His blood was shed and He died on the cross. Our sin....paid in full....then He was raised from the dead 3 days later, defeating death.....offering those who believe in Him, eternal life!

Hallelujah!

1 Peter 3:18 (NKJV)

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,

All of your sins.....past, present, and future..... have been paid for the instant you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

So if we've made that decision, why do we still need to daily ask for forgiveness?

1 John 1:8 (NKJV)

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

We all still sin, right? If you think you don't, you are lying to yourself. The truth is, we are sinners saved by grace. The truth is that in Christ you are a holy saint. But when you step out of Christ (sin) you get tainted, you get dirty.

Anyone here take baths or showers? If you don't raise your hand people are going to start moving away from you.....

Anyone taken more than ONE bath or shower in their life? Why do we do that? I mean....when I get out of the shower, I'm clean! I look clean.....I even smell good!

I can remain clean for a time, but can I remain clean forever? At some point as I'm going through my day I'm going to do something that gets me a little dirty. Some things are going to be obvious right? You work outside and can see that you are dirty. You get sweaty and maybe start to smell a little.....you know the big things.....obvious things...

But you, being perfectly clean after a shower, just by stepping out of the shower, you begin the process of getting dirty again. You may be able to sit in a protected environment for a while and stay "pretty clean", but if you could see in greater detail, you would see you are dirtier than you think....contaminated by the world. You have some dust on you, in your hair, the smells of other things soaking into your skin.....at the very least you own body has cells that are dying and flaking off, many of which are sitting on you right now!

You are dirtier than you think even if you seem fairly clean. You need you get cleansed again. You need to shower daily!

It's the same with our sin....YES, if you accept Jesus as Lord and Savior you are cleansed from ALL unrighteousness. BUT.....as soon as you step out into this world you begin the process of being unclean. Even if you can resist getting REALLY dirty, you can resist the big sins. By just being in this world you are dirtier than you think. You need to be daily cleansed from your contamination and even as the Spirit works in you, there are some things that rise to the surface and die that need washed off!

1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

You need to take a shower because you keep getting dirty and you need to ask for forgiveness because you keep sinning!

But there's another thing you need to know about sin and prayer...

Do you know that Jesus came not only to forgive us of sin but to FREE us from sin!

He came to BREAK the power of sin!

John 8:36 (NKJV)

Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

I'm here to tell you that Jesus does set the captives free! But it does not mean your enemy will not pursue you....

Romans 7:18-25 (NKJV)

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. 22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

The point here is that Christ sets us free yet we continue to let sin overtake us. As sin pursues us, what often happens is we give up, we get tired and let sin win. Then we get more energy, we have Jesus free us, we take off running, only to get tired and give in yet again.

When we constantly pray for God to forgive us..... When we regularly pray about our sin....the distance between us and that sin becomes greater. There becomes more and more separation.

If you want to sin less....pray more! Prayer is time with Jesus, it's growing closer to Him and the closer you are to Him, the further sin will be. It can't stand in His presence! It just can't remain there!

As a saint, you will still sin.....but you repent. You turn away from that sin and turn to Jesus. You change your mind, how you think about sin. You deny it, reject it, resist it.....you admit it!

I was reading the story of a Japanese navy captain during the war who had been captured by the Americans and spent four or five years in a prisoner of war camp in New Zealand. His name was Michiharu Shinya. He was converted there and later became a preacher to his own people.

Always a thoughtful man, Shinya wanted to know why so few of his fellow Japanese became Christians. It was obviously nothing to do with intellectual ability, since the most unlearned person could exercise simple faith in Christ. One of the most offensive features of the biblical faith to the Japanese was the blunt assertion that all men are sinners needing redemption. Many prisoners were very indignant to learn that the Bible labelled them as sinners. Shinya wrote, 'People are attached to a mistaken overconfidence in human nature, and to their own pride. When we realize how deeply-rooted and stubborn this is, we see how difficult it is for people to accept a belief based on the Bible.'

People have to be willing to recognize their sin, admit that sin, and turn away from that sin.

When is the last time you prayed "Jesus forgive me"?

Matthew 6:12 (NKJV)

And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.

Jesus points out here that we obviously have debts. This is also a good place to point out that the "Lord's Prayer" is not actually the prayer that the Lord prayed. Jesus had no reason to ask the Father to forgive His debts since He did not sin. This further shows that it's a model of prayer for US, His people.

So He points out that we have debt (sin) but notice that second line.

**AS we forgive our debtors.....in the same way we forgive.....forgive us! We like to leave that part out right?

Jesus taught us to forgive as widely and broadly as we want to experience forgiveness. Peter asked him how many times to forgive, suggesting that maybe seven times might be a right number. Seven was far beyond what most of the experts taught. Jesus raised the ante and said "seventy times seven." I think he was really saying that if you are still keeping track by that time, you don't get it.

Do you know that there is NO ONE that can do something greater against you than what you have done against God by sinning against Him? Do you know that there is NO ONE that can sin against you more times than you have sinned and will sin against God?

Yet, if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. How often? Every single time!

To forgive others we really need a proper perspective of our sin and God's grace and forgiveness.

Ephesians 4:32 (NKJV)

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

A common question is “well don’t we have to confess our wrongs to receive forgiveness? If so then I don’t have to forgive unless they come and admit what they have done and say that they are wrong”

I think that line of thinking might be off target. ***Forgive us our debts, AS we forgive our debtors.***

Do you want Jesus to forgive you of ALL your sins or only the ones that you recognize and remember to confess?

For me that’s easy....ALL.....I don’t even know all of the sins I commit. Some you don’t recognize until they are pointed out to you. Thank God for GRACE. Thank Jesus that grace abounds when we fail and fall short.

This doesn’t mean you shouldn’t confess what you DO recognize and the closer you are to Christ, the more you will recognize.

And it doesn’t mean that people shouldn’t recognize sins against you and they shouldn’t confess them and ask you for forgiveness. But odds are.....most often they won’t. You may need to distance yourself from them, that’s ok. Sin kinda does that....creates a gap.

BUT....it doesn’t give us a reason not to forgive....

Luke 23:34 (NKJV)

Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”

We say that we forgive, but when the least little friction arises, how quick we are to resurrect past grievances. We like to "bury the hatchet" with the handle sticking out. That way we can easily pick it up again and use it to our advantage.

If our sinless Lord is willing to forgive us--with all our faults--how can we withhold pardon from those who have sinned against us? True Christlike forgiveness buries the hatchet completely.

*“Every man should have a fair-sized cemetery in which to bury the faults of his friends.”
--Henry Ward Beecher*

John Wesley was traveling with General James Oglethorpe, who was angry with one of his subordinates. The man came to the general and humbly asked for forgiveness, but he was gruffly told, "I never forgive!"

Wesley looked the general in the eye and said, "Then I hope, sir, that you never sin."

Would you want God to forgive you in the same way you forgive others? Think about it.

Everyone who knows he's a sinner has a future. If you don't believe you are a sinner all you have is a past.